



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for October*

Lord Jesus Christ,

We serve in your name
as did your apostles before us.
And we live, as they did, in anxious times,
painfully aware of sin's presence in the world;
a world in need of your Father's mercy.

As your disciples, we also live in hope,
confident that your light is breaking through
the changing moods of life –
healing, embracing and transforming
as your presence moves deep within us.

Help us see every hour of our lives
as a moment of grace:
A time when we open our hearts
to you in prayer,
discover your Truth in our work and leisure
and live each moment as blessings
to one another.

Make us better stewards of the great wealth
of gifts you have bestowed upon us.
And show us how to teach others
to open their hearts to those who hunger,
thirst or who are strangers.

Refresh our minds,
renew our faith, and
inspire us to proclaim your Gospel
with a new energy in word and in deed
for you live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Being Good Stewards of Our Priests

Catholic priests are precious commodities, gifts to our communion of faith. But little do we know of their joys, or the struggles they often face in maintaining integrity and sanctity in their priesthood. We may imagine they get up every day and respond to a never-ending line of spiritual needs. But we cannot imagine how their lives are filled with intense pastoral encounters each day. With the many demands on their time and energy, priests deserve our support. Here are 15 ideas, in no particular order, to help us start thinking more intentionally about how we can better affirm and steward the spiritual and emotional well-being of our priests:



We may imagine they get up every day and respond to a never-ending line of spiritual needs. But we cannot imagine how their lives are filled with intense pastoral encounters each day.

1. Pray for priests, especially for your pastor and others with whom you are most closely connected. Let them know you are praying for them from time to time.
2. Respect a priest's need to take his scheduled day off each week and know what that day is. Don't contact him unless he asks. Follow the appropriate protocols for contacting a priest in case of an emergency.
3. Many priests get numerous gifts of sweets and baked goods during the holidays or as gifts of appreciation (A priest shared that one Christmas he received 37 different gifts of sweets and baked goods)! Consider other options to help keep our priests healthy and fit as they serve us in so many different capacities.

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4. Respect a priest's privacy regarding personal health issues.
5. Expect and encourage priests to take their full allotment of vacation time each year as well as an annual retreat to help them, both physically, mentally and spiritually.
6. Recognize that the ministry of priesthood requires a great deal of emotional energy (e.g., responding to deaths, conflicts in the parish and multiple demands from parishioners). Be especially sensitive to the times of the liturgical year that demand more of a priest's time such as the Advent and Lenten seasons.
7. Respect a priest's responsibility to keep many issues and information confidential. He may know of private information about parishioners or others, but he can not share it with you.
8. Discuss any conflicts or disagreements you may have with your pastor directly and confidentially. Give him the benefit of the doubt and seek reconciliation, not a "win." Encourage others to do the same.

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9. Support the pastor in setting expectations by parishioners for his time and scheduling priorities. Many pastors are so busy that an appointment with him may take weeks if it is not an emergency. Consider asking a staff person to assist you if that is possible.
10. If you are a lay leader in the parish, work with the pastor to identify which parish programs and activities truly require his presence and which might be equally guided by lay leadership. Some people expect the priest to be at every parish event and that is just not possible.
11. Assume that a priest strives for holiness and integrity each and every day. Discuss theological differences in a respectful manner, recognizing that Catholics can come to somewhat different understandings on some issues depending on their background, life situation, and the Holy Spirit's guidance in their lives.
12. Understand that "social" events with parishioners, although fun for everyone, are not always truly social events for a priest who can be pulled into a pastoral role at any time.
13. Don't have expectations that the priest is able to be your personal friend. Many priests need to set boundaries in today's climate. When they may have hundreds or thousands of souls to be the spiritual leader of, it is difficult for them to have many personal relationships outside of family and close friends.
14. Extend a simple "thank you" to a priest, and especially your pastor, when the occasion arises. An appreciation card or note is often needed, and will be welcome at any time and not just special occasions.
15. The best support you can offer and gift you can give to a priest is to practice your faith, offer to help him where needed and share your gifts of time and talent so he can direct you to a ministry or apostolate where you can serve him, the parish and the people of God.



Fair Trade Month

Exercising Good Stewardship
of Our Pocketbooks

Our late pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI, reminded us that as Christian disciples and as consumers, we have a specific social responsibility:

"It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral—and not simply—an economic act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise" (*Caritas in Veritate*, ("Charity in Truth"), no. 66).

**Fair Trade Month is a
time to educate ourselves
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our consumer products
come from.**

October is Fair Trade Month, a month that gives the Christian steward an opportunity to prayerfully reflect more deeply into that social responsibility as a consumer and for ongoing formation about what it means to love one's neighbor and how Church teaching encourages us to show more care about living beings, about our food and about the planet.

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from. It is a time to put the spotlight on companies that do not treat workers with dignity and a time to celebrate the farms, factories, brands and retailers that do care about the earth, its resources and their workers.

Pope Benedict's call was urgent and getting a better grasp of what Fair Trade is all about creates opportunities for us to respond to Pope Benedict's call in a small but significant way every day through the choices we make as consumers. When we make the conscious choice to purchase Fair Trade items, we are putting the values of Catholic social teaching into action, and working to realize our vision of economic justice. This month helps us explore the connections between Fair Trade and the core principles of Catholic social teaching.

There is a great deal of information online about Fair Trade and Catholic social teaching. Fair Trade invites us to ask questions about our products, and to think about who and where they come from. It encourages us to be more conscious about how we steward our dollars every time we shop. In many ways, Fair Trade can help us deepen our relationship with Christ Jesus by ensuring that we are following the Gospel imperative to love our neighbor.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for October*

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, or Theresa of Lisieux

Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, or Theresa of Lisieux, is a model stewardship saint because of her simple and practical way of life. Better known as the "Little Flower," Theresa was an extremely popular saint in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in France in 1873 to a very pious family, Marie Françoise Therese Martin became a Carmelite nun at Lisieux, France, at the age of fifteen. She dedicated her life to growing in holiness in a very simple and straightforward way. She meditated on the Sacred Scriptures as well as the writings of famous saints such as Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales and John of the Cross. She was faithful to the Carmelite Rule and the rhythm of daily life and worship in her religious community. Theresa believed that authentic holiness could be grasped by anyone. It was not just a pious ideal available only to clergy and religious.

In 1895 she suffered the initial stages of tuberculosis, the disease that eventually caused her death. And in the last two years of her life she remained at Lisieux and wrote a spiritual autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, which became immensely popular and was translated into several languages after her death. She made a well-known promise to spend her life in heaven continuing to do good works on earth, "as long as there were souls to be saved." She said she would let fall a "shower of roses" from heaven.

St. Theresa died in 1897 at the age of 24. She was canonized in 1925, an amazingly short length of time since her death. She was declared a Doctor of the Church by Saint John Paul II in 1997. Theresa of Lisieux is the patron saint of the missions, florists, aviators, and the countries France and Russia. Her feast day is October 1.



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How Will You Celebrate World Mission Sunday?

October 18 is World Mission Sunday! Our late Pontiff, Pope Francis, in his message for World Mission Sunday 2023, reflected on the theme “Hearts on fire, feet on the move,” based on the story of the disciples who encounter Jesus on their way to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35). Every year, this Sunday in October celebrates and encourages our efforts to proclaim the Gospel in both word and deed.

One parish marked the occasion by offering a glimpse into the Church’s global solidarity. Students representing the cultural diversity of the parish processed, readings and songs were offered in various languages, and a feast offering ethnic dishes followed the liturgy. That Sunday, parishioners enjoyed an intimate connection to the legacy of missionary support that can be traced back nearly two centuries.



North America was “mission territory” in the early 1800s when Pauline Jaricot gathered small groups in her family’s mill in Lyon, France to offer prayers and sacrificial giving to support missionary work in North America and China. Her effort grew to become the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which continues to promote the global mission of the Church.

By the early 1920s, the United States was no longer a primary focus of missionary activity. But there was concern that Catholics in the United States, who focused primarily on their local Church, lacked an understanding of the Church’s global and mission outreach. In 1926, Church leaders designated the second to last Sunday in October as World Mission Sunday to broaden the understanding of the Church’s global mission.

Every parish is asked to raise awareness of the worldwide evangelizing efforts of the Church. Parishes also take up a collection for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to be used for the missions. Worldwide efforts like World Mission Sunday support more than 1,000 missionary dioceses.

In the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council, echoing the missionary credo found in the words of the Gospel of Matthew (28:18), emphasized that the Church is missionary by nature, and every baptized Catholic is called to missionary work through good works and setting a good example.

The new understanding of ‘mission’ is focused on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. St. Paul maintained that the Kingdom of God is peace, justice, joy and life in the Holy Spirit. If we understand ‘mission’ as this spreading of the Kingdom of God, then we work for peace and justice. We celebrate life as gift from God lived joyfully in the Spirit.

What is your parish doing for World Mission Sunday? If you are in parish leadership, plan something different this year -- a mission training day, a lunch or dinner event, a guest speaker, a special adult formation class focused on the Church’s world mission. Why not highlight the global projects and partners that your parish supports?



Stewardship of Prayer: The Rosary

In the midst of our busy lives, October strikes a peaceful note. Summer travel is over, and we’re back into a routine. Crisp football weather and vibrant autumn colors abound, and the snow shovels remain out of sight. The holiday rush lies weeks in the future, with the simple pleasures of Halloween the only red-letter date on our calendars.

If October provides a bit of a lull in a hectic world, how appropriate that October is designated the month of the Rosary. The popularity of the Rosary has waxed and waned in recent years, but perhaps nothing testifies to the Rosary’s strength and durability more than the example of James Foley, the American journalist beheaded by the terror group ISIL in 2014. A Marquette University graduate, Foley had earlier been captured and held captive in Libya. Released from that first captivity, he told his alma mater that prayer had seen him through the ordeal. “I began to pray the Rosary. It was what my mother and grandmother would have prayed.”

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Indeed, millions of Catholic women still sleep with the Rosary under their pillow or by their bedside. Next to the crucifix, it's probably the most common Catholic sacramental in our homes. Yet, sometimes, we neglect to pray the Rosary. Why? Perhaps it was those childhood Rosaries, with our minds wandering to the playground as we waited for the droning of repetitive prayers to end. But if it's just meaningless recitation, it's not what the Rosary is meant to be. Perhaps it's more of an adult prayer than we realize.



Does anything slow down our frantic lives like the slow recitation and meditation of this ancient prayer?

The Rosary presents a unique combination of recitation and meditation. The simple cadence it presents helps our minds give way to mystery. Does anything slow down our frantic lives like the slow recitation and meditation of this ancient prayer? Tradition tells us the Rosary was given to St. Dominic by Our Lady herself in the 12th Century. The Rosary has remained a popular devotion over the centuries, a favorite of popes and peasants alike. The Rosary, Pope Leo XIII declared, "is composed of two parts, distinct but inseparable — the meditation on the mysteries and the recitation of the prayers. It is thus a kind of prayer that requires not only some raising of the soul to God, but also a particular and explicit attention" (*Incunda semper*). October is the ideal time of year to once again savor the mysteries of the Rosary.

Tips for Ongoing Parish Stewardship Formation

Excerpted and adapted from Leisa Anslinger's *Abundant Living, Abundant Giving* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2020).



Helping people understand themselves and grow as Christian stewards requires an ongoing process of parish faith formation. Often, parish pastoral leaders begin to share the stewardship message with parishioners and see initial growth in their willingness to share their time, offer service and give financially, but then the stewardship messages cease, their efforts wane and there is a corresponding drop in parishioner participation. Because stewardship is a way of life, leading people to grow as faithful stewards must be sustained for the long term. This requires us to be attentive to every means of

communication and faith formation possible with people at every age and state of life and faith.

One key to ongoing stewardship formation is helping parishioners make connections with the Sunday readings and liturgical seasons. The rhythm of the liturgical year provides a framework for the ways we hear and respond to the gospel call to stewardship. Making stewardship connections to the readings and sharing the stewardship message through the lens of the liturgical seasons helps to establish a pattern of ongoing reflection, discernment and action in the lives of parishioners.

As you shape your stewardship communications and practices, keep these themes in mind. Look for them in the Sunday readings and make connections through the homily, stewardship highlights and communications, faith formation, in parish meetings and during sacramental preparation. Here are some themes to consider during times of sacramental preparation or general catechesis:

- Key stewardship themes generally and for highlighting the Sacrament of Baptism: discipleship, following Jesus, conversion, blessing, grace, body of Christ, self-giving, service, compassion, justice, love.
- Key stewardship themes for highlighting the Sacrament of Confirmation: Holy Spirit, gifts, talents, inspiration, strength, discernment, outpouring, mission.
- Key stewardship themes for highlighting the Sacrament of Eucharist: Thanksgiving, presence, lifelong, sacrifice, call-response, conversion, being sent.

Wherever your parish is in stewardship formation, remember to use the communications vehicles at your disposal, make connections between stewardship and the Sunday readings and be mindful of key stewardship themes you can use in the areas of faith formation, sacramental preparation and other areas of parish catechesis. This process will help you discover even more ways to help parishioners embrace stewardship as a way of life.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 3/4, 2026

This weekend's Gospel reading poses some challenging stewardship questions, particularly at a time when so many people are becoming disengaged from their faith communities. When Christ returns, will we be found working diligently in the Lord's "vineyard;" converting our own hearts into a rich harvest of love and compassion? Calling those outside our vineyard to enter into the joy of the Lord? Or will we just be living off of what the Lord has given us, but not sharing God's love with others? Jesus' parable suggests that if we aren't good stewards of the gifts we've been given then the gifts will be taken away, and we will be called to give an account for our failures. We have all we need for a bountiful harvest, even during these disquieting times. What will our Lord find when He returns and asks us to give an account?

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 10/11, 2026

There are a number of Bible verses Christians have memorized. One of them is in Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians found in this weekend's second reading: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phi. 4:13). Most people define themselves either by their problems or their possibilities. Fearful people wake up each morning ensnared by their problems. Christian stewards wake up reflecting on their possibilities with confidence and hope. Some stewardship reflection questions for the week: What challenges do you back away from because you doubt that you are up to them? What would you attempt tomorrow if you were sure God would help you?

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 17/18, 2026

Jesus offers us a profound teaching on stewardship in this weekend's reading: What belongs to Caesar? What belongs to God? Christian stewards recognize that everything they have belongs to God. God created them,

and God has claims on every part of their existence. They also realize that the sovereign is an institution whose nature and purpose is to promote the common good and protect the welfare of its citizenry. As long as it accomplishes this mission while treating every single person with deep respect, justice and compassion, it merits the steward's support and cooperation. Christian stewards know what belongs to the Lord, and they are better citizens when they live their lives according to his Gospel.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 24/25, 2023

There is one command that summarizes this weekend's Gospel: to love. For Jesus there is no distinction between these two commands of loving God and neighbor. One naturally flows from the other. In fact, for Jesus, these commands constitute a way of life for Christian stewards; a unique approach to life and to their relationship with others. Our neighbors include everyone with whom we come into contact: family members, friends, people we don't like, strangers and particularly those most in need of our love and compassion. Love calls us to open our hearts and do more to help others grow closer to the Lord. How might we follow Christ's love command more fervently?

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 31/November 1, 2026

In today's Gospel Jesus lays judgment on the scribes and Pharisees for the hypocritical way they lived out their faith. The criticisms he levies are all about the ways righteousness turns into self-righteousness, and how religious belief could turn into something that was more about elevating themselves than about what they could do for God or their neighbor. Good stewards know that discipleship means finding ways to serve, and searching for ways to be a servant—to live as a servant of Christ. When faith is authentically lived out in community everyone is enriched, and God is glorified. Reflect this week on how you live out your faith.